

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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LAB-04 NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 L-02

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MADRID 160

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: ELAB, SP

SUBJECT: SPANISH LABOR AND STRIKE SITUATION

REF MADRID 7851

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. SUBSTANTIAL LABOR AGITATION AND STRIKE ACTIVITY HAS CONTINUED INTO NEW YEAR AND IS LIKELY PERSIST UNTIL LATE SPRING. PAST MONTH HAS WITNESSED: (A) FIRST SUCCESSFUL GENERAL STRIKE ATTEMPT THROUGHOUT BASQUE PROVINCES SINCE CIVIL WAR; (B) CONSIDERABLE STRIKE ACTIVITY IN BARCELONA AREA, WHERE 20,000 WORKER SEAT AUTO STRIKE HAS JUST TAKEN TURN FOR WORSE; (C) STRIKES AND WORK STOPPAGES IN MADRID AREA AS WELL AS IN OTHER CITIES; (C) RELATIVE INACTIVITY IN GOVT LABOR SPHERE, WHILE LABOR MINISTER CONTINUES PROMISE TO UNVEIL SOON DRAFT BASIC LABOR LAW; AND (C) VISIT OF ITALIAN UNITARY TRADE UNION DELEGATION WHICH MET WITH
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CLANDESTINE WORKERS COMMISSIONS AND SOUGHT UNSECCCESSFULLY TO VISIT

JAILED SPANISH LABOR LEADERS, INCLUDING MARCELINO CAMACHO.
END SUMMARY.

2. PAST FEW WEEKS HAVE WITNESSED MOST INTENSE STRIKE ACTIVITY
THUS FAR, WITH FREQUENT WORK STOPPAGES, PLANT SIT-INS, RETALIATORY
COMPANY LOCKOUTS AND FIRINGS, AND OCCASIONAL CONFRONTATIONS
STRIKING WORKERS WITH POLICE. WITH ONE MAJOR EXCEPTION (I.E.
RELATIVELY SUCCESSFUL MID-DEC GENERAL STRIKE ATTEMPT ON BASQUE
PROVINCES), MOST STRIKES HAVE ORIGINALLY BEEN PRECIPITATED BY LABOR
RELATED MOTIVATIONS, INCLUDING CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS, DISCONTENT
OVER RAPIDLY RISING COST OF LIVING, RUMORS OF POSSIBLE BANKRUPTCIES
AND PLANT CLOSURES, SOLIDARITY IN SUPPORT OF WORKERS FIRED OR
OTHERWISE DISCIPLINED FOR INVOLVEMENT IN STRIKE ACTIVITY, AND
DISSATISFACTION WITH ROLE AND REPRESENTATIVITY OF SHIP STEWARDS.
THERE ALSO WIDESPREAD SUSPICION EMPLOYERS HAVE SOMETIMES
DELIVERATELY PROVOKED STRIKES IN ORDER TO CLOSE FACTORIES IN
RETALIATION AS A MEANS OF CUTTING COSTS DURING CURRENT GENERAL
ECONOMIC CRISIS. MANY OF STRIKES, HOWEVER, HAVE BEEN RAPIDLY
POLITICIZED ONCE THEY GOT UNDERWAY.

3. THE ONE ENTIRELY POLITICAL STRIKE FROM OUTSET WAS DEC 11
GENERAL STRIKE ATTEMPT ON BASQUE COUNTRY (REFTEL). SEVERAL
CLANDESTINE EXTREMIST GROUPS ISSUED ORIGINAL CONVOCATION THIS
STRIKE INCLUDING: (A) CATHOLIC EXTREMIST ORT; (B) MAOIST MCE; (C)
BASQUE TERRORIST ETA; AND (D) TROTSKYITE LCR. STRIKE CALL WAS TIMED
COINCIDE WITH FOURTH ANNIVERSARY 1970 BURGOS TRIAL. CLANDESTINE
LABOR SOURCES HAVE TOLD LABATT THAT STRIKE MET WITH WIDESPREAD
RESPONSE, INVOLVED SOME 150,000 WORKERS, WAS ONE OF MOST EFFECTIVE
SUCH ATTEMPTS SINCE SPANISH CIVIL WAR, AND THAT VARIOUS MODERATE
CLANDESTINE LABOR ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS SOCIALIST UGT, CATHOLIC
ORIENTED USO, AND BASQUE NATIONALIST STV SUBSEQUENTLY ALSO JOINED
STRIKE, ALTHOUGH, SIGNIFICANTLY SPANISH COMMUNIST PARTY (PCE) DID
NOT PARTICIPATE. SAME SOURCES CLAIM PCE IMAGE HAS SUFFERED SOME
WHAT BECAUSE NEITHER PCE NOR PCE-DOMINATED WORKERS COMMISSIONS
PARTICIPATED IN STRIKE, AND THEY ATTRIBUTED PCE'S RELUCTANCE TO
PARTICIPATE TO FACT PCE COULD NEITHER CLAIM CREDIT FOR NOR
CONTROL STRIKE. (IT
SHOULD BE NOTED THAT BASQUE COUNTRY IS ONE AREA WHERE PCE HAS
LEAST INFLUENCE IN BOTH LABOR AND POLITICAL SPHERES). STRIKE
WAS REPORTEDLY 80 PERCENT EFFECTIVE IN GUIPUZCOA, SLIGHTLY LESS
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EFFECTIVE IN VIZCAYA, QUITE EFFECTIVE IN PAMPLONA AREA OF AVARRE,
AND HAD LITTLE OR NO EFFECT IN FOURTH BASQUE PROVINCE OF ALAVA.

4. STRIKE ACTIVITY IN BASQUE PROVINCES DECLINED SUBSTANTIALY
AFTER DEC 11 STRIKE, ALTHOUGH THERE STILL NUMBER STRIKES IN BILBAO
(E.G. WORKERS AT ALTOS HORNOS STEEL MILL COMMENCED STRIKE ON JAN
9) AND IN VARIOUS CITIES OF GUIPUZCOA. LABOR AGITATION PAMPLONA
AREA, HOWEVER, STILL AT HIGH PITCH, AND SOME 4,500 WORKERS IN 20

FIRMS EITHER STILL ON STRIKE FOR VARIETY OF LABOR MOTIVES OR ARE STILL LOCKED OUT BY COMPANIES DUE TO PREVIOUS STRIKES. (LATEST TWIST INVOLVES 100 STRIKING PAMPLONA AREA MINERS WHO COMMENCED SIT IN AT BOTTOM OF POTASSIUM MINE SHAFT ON JAN 7). PAMPLONA AREA IS ONE OF MOST POLITICIZED LABOR ZONES IN COUNTRY AND REPORTEDLY SOME 70 LABOR ACTIVISTS HAVE BEEN ARRESTED THERE IN RECENT WEEKS. PAMPLONA LABOR ACTIVISM LARGELY FOMENTED BY EXTREMIST-ORIENTED ORT AS WELL AS BY PROGRESSIVE CATHOLIC PRIESTS IN AREA.

5. CURRENT FOCUS LABOR UNREST HAS NOW SHIFTED TO BARCELONA AREA, AND PARTICULARLY TO 20,000 WORKER SEAT AUTOMOBILE PLANT. SEAT SITUATION, WHERE STRIKES FOLLOWED BY RETALIATORY COMPANY LOCKOUTS CONTINUED OVER CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY SEASON, INVOLVES COMPLEX OF ACCUMULATED ISSUES, INCLUDING CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS, COMPANY SCHEME FOR REDUCED WORK WEEK DUE TO FIRM'S ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES, RECENT RESIGNATIONS OF 60 OUT OF 220 SEAT SHOP STEWARDS (WHICH RESIGNATIONS COMPANY HAS REFUSED TO ACCEPT) AND A WORKER DEMAND THAT COMPANY RECOGNIZE AND BARGAIN ONLY WITH "AUTHENTIC WORKER LEADERS" (MEANING REPS OF CLANDESTINE LABOR GROUPS) IN PLANT, SOLIDARITY WITH FIRED WORKERS, AND INCREASINGLY POLITICIZED CLIMATE FOMENTED BY WORKERS, AND INCREASINGLY POLITICIZED CLIMATE FOMENTED BY WORKERS COMMISSIONS AND OTHER CLANDESTINE LABOR GROUPS. ON JAN 8 SEAT ANNOUNCED CLOSURE UNTIL JAN 14 AS DISCIPLINARY MEASURE DUE TO RESUMPTION BY STRIKERS OF PLANT SIT-IN, AMID SUSPICION SUCH CLOSURE MAY HAVE BEEN COST-CUTTING AIM OF COMPANY ALL ALONG. SEAT ALSO REPORTEDLY IN PROCESS OF FIRING 400 OF MOST ACTIVIST WORKERS. THESE ACTIONS CAN ONLY EXACERBATE SEAT AND BARCELONA LABOR SITUATION, WITH AGITATION LIKELY INTENSIFY. ON JAN 8 AND 9 THERE REPORTEDLY WERE EFFORTS BY GROUPS OF DISGRUNTLED SEAT WORKERS TO MARCH THROUGH BARCELONA AND TO STAGE UNAUTHORIZED ASSEMBLIES IN BARCELONA OFFICES OF GOVT
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CONTROLLED SPANISH SYNDICAL ORGANIZATION (SSO), ALTHOUGH PROTESTERS WERE PROMPTLY DISPERSED BY POLICE. IT NOW RUMORED CLANDESTINE LABOR GROUPS, MAY SOON SEEK ATTEMPT GENERAL STRIKE BARCELONA AREA, IF DETERIORATING BARCELONA LABOR CLIMATE DEEMED SUFFICIENTLY PROPITIOUS. MEANWHILE A FEW OTHER

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2MADRID 160

IMPORTANT BARCELONA STRIKES HAVE CONTINUED INTO NEW YEAR,
E.G. AT OLIVETTI TYPEWRITER FACTORY, AT AEG TELEFUNKEN
PLANT, AND AT BORDENS FACTORY.

6. MADRID HAS BEEN A THIRD FOCUS OF SUBSTANTIAL STRIKE
ACTIVITY. MOST IMPORTANT RECENT WORK STOPPAGES HAVE
BEEN: A) AMONG BANK WORKERS; B) AT SIEMENS PLANT;
C) AMONG INSURANCE WORKERS (WHICH STRIKE NOW SETTLED);
D) BRIEF CONSTRUCTION WORKERS STRIKE IN MID DECEMBER;
E) AMONG MADRID TAXI DRIVERS (THIS STRIKE RESULTED ON
DECEMBER 14 IN AMUSING TACTIC OF 500 TAXIS BLOCKING CEN-
TRAL MADRID INTERSECTION UNTIL POLICE FORCEABLY DIS-
PERSED TAXIS); AND F) AT HAUSER AND MENET PRINTING
COMPANY (WHICH STRIKE PREVENTED SOME NATIONAL MAGAZINES
FROM APPEARING).

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7. RECENT STRIKES HAVE ALSO AFFECTED FACTORIES IN
OTHER SPANISH CITIES, INCLUDING A) MALAGA, WHERE CITESA
FACTORY, AN AFFILIATE OF ITT, HAS BEEN UNDERGOING PRO-
LONGED STRIKE; B) EL FERROL, WHERE 6000 WORKERS AT

ASTANO SHIPYARDS HAVE BEEN STRIKING OVER CONTRACT ISSUES; C) VALLADOLID, WHERE STRIKE AT RENAULT AUTOMOBILE PLANT HAS ONCE AGAIN BEEN REACTIVATED; D) CADIZ, WHERE 3000 SHIPYARD WORKERS HAVE STRUCK; E) SEVILLE, IN SEVERAL SMALL FACOTORIES IN AREA; F) ZARAGOZA, WHERE 2000 METAL-WORKERS OF VARIOUS FIRMS ARE ON STRIKE; AND G) VALENCIA, WHERE LOCAL SHIPYARDS HAVE EXPERIENCED LABOR PROBLEMS.

8. IN VALENCIA, STRAINED LABOR CLIMATE WAS SOMEWHAT DEFUSED WHEN PUBLIC ORDER COURT ON DECEMBER 18 PASSED SENTENCE ON 14 WORKER COMMISSION MEMBERS WHO WERE BROUGHT TO TRIAL ON NOV 27 FOR ALLEGED PARTICIPATION IN 1969 WORKERS COMMISSION ACTIVITY THAT AREA. PRE-SIDING JUDGE ACQUITTED 9 OF 14 STANDING TRIAL, INCLUDING TWO JESUIT PRIENST WHO WERE AMONG ACCUSED, AND SENTENCES FOR OTHER FIVE RANGED FROM ONE TO FOUR YEARS IMPRISONMENT. THESE ACQUITTALS, PARTICULARLY OF PRIESTS, APPEAR TO HAVE DEFLATED INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN WHICH APPEARED TO BE COMMENCING OVER THIS CASE.

9. THERE HAS BEEN RELATIVELY LITTLE GOVERNMENT ACTIVITY IN LABOR SPHERE DURING PAST MONTH. LABOR MINISTER HAD INDICATED THAT DRAFT BASIC LABOR LAW WHICH HE HAD BEEN PROMISING DURING PAST TWO YEARS AND WHICH DRAFT REPORTEDLY MAY CONTAIN PROVISION GRANTING SOME FORM OF MODIFIED RIGHT TO STRIKE, WOULD BE APPROVED AT CABINET MEETING AND FORMALLY UNVEILED DURING DECEMBER, BUT THIS DID NOT TRANSPIRE. REPORTEDLY DRAFT LAW HAS PROVOKED OPPOSITION FROM CONSERVATIVE FORCES IN GOVERNMENT, AND THEE RUMORS LABOR MINISTER MIGHT EVEN CONSIDER RESSIGNATION IF HE UNABLE TO GET THIS PIECE OF LEGISLATION, ON WHICH HE HAS STAKED HIS PERSONAL PRESTIGE, APPROVED IN NEAR FUTURE.

10. GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED SSO CONTINUES ITS GENERALLY INEFFECTIVE EFFORTS IN MOST AREAS TO SEEK COPE WITH WAVE OF STRIKES. SIGNIFICANT EXCEPTION HAS BEEN IN ACTIVE BARCELONA AREA, WHERE PROVINCIAL SSO DELEGATE SOCIAS CONFIDENTIAL

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HUMBERT, ONE OF FEW YOUNG LIBERALIZERS IN SSO, HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL, THROUGH HIS PERSONAL INTERVENTION AND BY CIRCUMVENTING ESTABLISHED SSO AND LABOR MINISTRY MACHINERY, IN SETTLING A FEW STRIKES (SUCH AS A RECENT TICKLISH STRIKE WHICH PREVENTED THE PUBLICATION, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN FRANCO SPAIN, OF A LEADING BARCELONA DAILY NEWSPAPER) BY BRINGING THE PARTIES TO AGREEMENT AND BY COMMITTINGHIMSELF TO PERSONNALLY GUARANTEEING SUCH AGGREEMENTS.

11. RE INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITY, LATEST OF SEVERAL RECENT

FOREIGN TRADE UNION VISITS TO SPAIN WAS BY A UNITARY DELEGATION OF EIGHT ITALIAN TRADE UNIONISTS, REPORTEDLY FROM ITALIAN CGIL, CISL, AND UIL (AND INCLUDING ONE MEMBER OF ACLI), FROM DECEMBER 17-23 WHO MET WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF ILLEGAL CLANDESTINE TRADE UNIONS, NOTABLY WITH COMMUNIST-DOMINATED WORKERS COMMISSIONS. ITALIAN DELEGATION ALSO REQUESTED AUDIENCES WITH VARIOUS SPANISH JUDICIAL AUTHORITIES IN ORDER REGISTER PROTESTS OVER WORKERS COMMISSIONS LEADERS WHO HAVE BEEN IN JAIL FROM FAMOUS "CARABANCHEL TEN" CASE, AND ALSO SOLICITED RIGHT TO VISIT MOST FAMOUS "CARABANCHEL TEN" PRISONER, MARCELINO CAMACHO, IN JAIL. THESE REQUESTS WERE DENIED. DELEGATION ALSO MET WITH JOAQUIN RUIZ GIMENEZ, PRINCIPAL SPANISH CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC LEADER. MOST INTERESTING ASPECT ITALIAN DELEGATION'S VISIT WAS THAT, UNLIKE OTHER ITALIAN TRADE UNION VISITS IN RECENT YEARS WHICH HAVE BEEN CLANDESTINE IN NATURE, THIS VISIT WAS OPEN, RECEIVED PUBLICITY IN SPANISH PRESS, AND DELEGATION WAS REPORTEDLY NOT HAMPERED NOR HARASSED BY POLICE.

12. PROSPECTS ARE FOR CONTINUED STRIKES AND LABOR AGITATION THROUGH LATE SPING, FOR CONTINUED FOREIGN TRADE UNION INTEREST IN SPAIN, FOR "BASIC LABOR LAW" TO PERHAPS BE UNVEILED, AND FOR CONSIDERABLE INTEREST IN FORTHCOMING NATION-WIDE SSO SHOP STEWARD ELECTIONS SCHEDULED FOR THIS SPRING.
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